

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate.

The President's Radio Address

December 20, 1997

Good morning. In this season of hope and special time for our loved ones, I'd like to share some thoughts on what all Americans can do to strengthen our families. Specifically, I want to talk about our efforts to protect our children from drugs, the most dangerous enemy of childhood. Nothing can cause more pain and heartbreak in a family or cause more harm to a child's future than the use and abuse of drugs.

We should be very proud that drug use among all Americans has fallen by one-half since 1979. But in recent years teenage drug use was rising. Today I have some good news.

A second major survey on drug use this year has confirmed that for the first time since 1991, our teenagers are beginning to turn away from drugs. In a report I'm releasing today, the Department of Health and Human Services has found that the increasing rates of teen drug use are leveling off and, in some cases, decreasing. Today's eighth graders are less likely to have used drugs over the past year, and just as important, they are more likely to disapprove of drug use. This change in attitudes represents a glimmer of hope in our efforts to protect our children from drugs. But our work is far from over.

The most effective strategy we have against drugs begins at home. It's a fight that can be won at kitchen tables all across America. This holiday season, as we spend some hard-earned time with our families, I urge all parents to sit down with their children, as Hillary and I have done, and share a simple and important lesson: Drugs are dangerous; drugs are wrong; and drugs can kill you.

But Government can also do its part to help parents keep their children safe from drugs. Over the past 5 years, our administration has put in place a comprehensive national plan to

fight drugs at all levels. We're putting 100,000 community police on our streets. We've cracked down on meth dealers and seized their labs. We've expanded mandatory drug testing for parolees and demanded that drug offenders get the treatment they need to live productive lives. We've worked with neighboring countries to prevent drugs from crossing our borders in the first place and built new community coalitions against drugs.

Most importantly, we fought to protect the safe and drug-free schools program that helps to keep drugs out of classrooms and away from children. The historic Balanced Budget Act I signed this summer also includes \$195 million for a national youth antidrug media campaign. Our goal is to make sure that every time a child turns on the TV, listens to the radio, or surfs the Internet, he or she will get the powerful message that drugs can destroy your life.

But we can't ever forget that the best drug enforcement prevention effort still is parents teaching their children the difference between right and wrong when it comes to drugs. So once again, I call upon our parents to build on the progress we're making by talking frankly to your children about the destructive consequences of trying and using drugs.

As we celebrate the blessings of the year just past, let's all work to ensure that every child can look forward to a safe, healthy, and hopeful new year.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6 p.m. on December 19 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 20.